THE AMERICANISM OF LINCOLN

BY CHEESMAN A. HERRICK

WITH Americans, Abraham Lincoln is what John Drinkwater terms "an article of faith". This follows no doubt from the fact that he was the most American of all Americans. He was the most indigenous political leader America had yet produced. He was a child of the frontier, but he was vastly more than a backwoodsman. His family represented American migratory instincts, and the many-sided American life, particularly of the pioneers. As the family moved from place to place its members intermarried with those of the various localities, and, in a sense, gathered up and carried forward the traditions of the parts of America through which it passed.

The first in the line of the family from which Abraham Lincoln sprang came from England to Hingham, Massachusetts, whence descendants moved out into that Colony, settling at Scituate and Hull; taking up the occupations of farmer, blacksmith and miller. Mordecai Lincoln moved from Hull, where he had served as blacksmith and ironworker, to Monmouth County, New Jersey, in 1714, or a little before that date, and thence, probably in 1720, to French Creek, in the northern part of Chester County, Pennsylvania, where the smelting of iron was being introduced. He was a resident of Chester County and of Exeter Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania, during the third, fourth, and fifth decades of the eighteenth century. An account for 1735 shows that Mordecai Lincoln paid for shoes for his "Negro man". From this we may infer that the great-great-grandfather of Abraham Lincoln probably owned a negro slave in Pennsylvania one hundred and thirty-eight years before the Emancipation Proclamation. During the second quarter of the eighteenth century a considerable migration took place from Pennsylvania down the Great Valley to Virginia. Daniel Boone and, later, John Lincoln, the great-grandfather of Abraham Lincoln, shared in this

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.